

Produce in gardens contaminated by floodwaters

Olmsted County Public Services is alerting residents that flooding, surface water runoff and fluctuating river water levels may cause contamination of produce in gardens. Flood or surface water runoff that enters garden areas often contains harmful bacteria, viruses, chemicals, or sewage. To eliminate all risk, the most conservative course of action would be to discard all produce that has been potentially contaminated by flood waters.

If you decide to consume garden produce that has been affected by flood waters, please note the following guidance:

- * Wash all produce thoroughly before consumption.
- * It is recommended that you fully cook all produce to 165°F. Cooking produce will kill harmful bacteria or microbes that may be on the produce.
- * Root crops (carrots, potatoes, parsnips, etc) can be washed, peeled, and cooked.
- * Leafy produce such as spinach or cabbage should be eaten only after they have been cooked.
- * Leafy produce that will not be cooked, such as lettuce, spinach or other salad greens, should be discarded because washing may not remove possible contamination.
- * Produce that has been punctured or damaged or will not be cooked before eating, should be discarded.
- * When preparing produce, do not let the produce remain at room temperature for an extended period of time. Refrigerate all leftover cooked foods promptly and maintain refrigerator temperature at 40°F or less.

It is important to wash your hands thoroughly after working in your garden, cleaning up flood debris, and before eating, drinking or preparing food items. Follow these simple steps for proper handwashing:

1. Wet hands with warm, running water (if available).
 2. Add soap.
 3. Rub hands vigorously for 20 seconds.
- Wash all surfaces including:
- o Backs of hands
 - o Wrists
 - o Between fingers
 - o Tips of fingers
 - o Thumbs under fingernails-nailbrush is best
4. Rinse.
 - o Keep fingers pointing down
5. Dry vigorously with paper or clean cloth towel.
 6. Turn off faucet with towel and open door with towel.

Produce that grows after the flood waters subside should be safe to consume. It is a good idea to wash, peel and cook produce before consuming the product.

For more information see:

- www.olmstedcounty.com
- <http://www.extension.umn.edu/administrative/disasterresponse/components/gardens02.html>